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[redacted] NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

April 9, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR COLONEL WORTHMAN

SUBJECT: The NRO Staff and Airborne Reconnaissance Projects

This memorandum responds to your request of March 25 for a concept paper on the management and operation of national airborne reconnaissance projects.

I have deliberately prepared a very limited paper which addresses the two issues I consider basic to a discussion of airborne overhead reconnaissance of denied areas. The fundamental issue is the division of responsibilities between the JRC and the NRO. The second issue, of lesser importance, is the role of the NRO Staff in fulfilling the responsibilities of the NRO for airborne collection vehicles.

I have not attempted to develop the level of detail presented by M[redacted] My concept paper does not address staffing of new NRO functions and the role of the NRO Staff as a line element of operational command is similarly not discussed.

My paper outlines a concept for fulfilling the responsibilities of the DNRO with respect to airborne overhead reconnaissance of denied areas. The concept I have developed assumes that the DNRO, through his Staff, desires to exercise the same level of management and control of airborne reconnaissance projects as is currently exercised in satellite operations.

I am confident that the implementation of this concept would provide more effective management of airborne reconnaissance assets used to respond to national requirements.

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JOHN R. MECEDA
Captain, USAF

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NRO RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY FOR AIRBORNE RECONNAISSANCE PROJECTS

This paper describes a concept for management and control of U.S. assets for airborne overhead reconnaissance of denied areas. The background and specific problem that this paper addresses is described in a memorandum to General Berg from SS-4, "NRO Responsibilities for NRP Air Vehicle Reconnaissance Projects," dated March 12, 1969.

The specificity of the DOD/CIA Agreement of August 11, 1965 and the DOD Directive TS 5105.23 deny any but the most strict interpretation of the responsibilities and authority of the NRO with respect to overhead reconnaissance of denied areas. Given a satisfactory definition of the phrase, "denied areas," we consider only a reaffirmation of the NRO authority with regard to airborne reconnaissance necessary to be commensurate with the acknowledged responsibilities of the DNRO. New directives or agreements are not required, although minor amendments are needed in some cases.

To adequately describe the authority which has been delegated to the DNRO by the Secretary of Defense, a more appropriate definition of the phrase, "denied areas" must be considered by USIB. The present

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definition is contained in DCID 1/13:

> Denied areas include all territory and territorial waters claimed by Communist nations, as well as such other areas of priority intelligence interest as may be determined by USIB.

This definition cannot be used to adequately detail the division of responsibilities of the JCS and the DNRO. For example, North Vietnam is a Communist country and therefore a "denied area" by DCID 1/13. North Vietnam is, however, also within a military theater of operations. Absent clarifying directives, the NRO and the JCS have the authority and responsibility for overhead reconnaissance of North Vietnam. Similarly, the responsibility for overhead reconnaissance of Laos and Cambodia is ill-defined. These two countries are not Communist and not overtly part of a military theater of operations; however, overhead reconnaissance of Laos and Cambodia is conducted.

The following definition of "denied areas" could clarify the authority and responsibility for overhead reconnaissance:

> A denied area is any national land or water mass, in which armed forces of the United States are not overtly engaged in conflict, and for which specific overhead reconnaissance approval has not been granted by the sovereign.

This definition must be approved by the DCI or the USIB and act as a basis for further clarification of NRO and JRC roles and responsibilities.

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The management authority of the DNRO over all overhead reconnaissance assets must be reaffirmed. Management of military airborne assets means control of research and development, funding, deployment, response to requirements, reporting, 303 Committee approval. Operational control of military airborne assets will continue to be exercised by the JRC. The daily management of military and CIA airborne reconnaissance assets will be the responsibility of the NRO Staff.

All USIB requirements for intelligence of denied areas which can be satisfied by overhead reconnaissance will be forwarded to [redacted] The NRO Staff will determine the proper allocation of NRP assets to satisfy the requirement [redacted] will task the JRC and OSA to provide the necessary coverage. The operational control of each mission will be delegated to the JRC and OSA respectively.

The NRO Staff will report to the cognizant USIB boards concerning the current status of requirements and actions taken in satisfaction of USIB requirements.

The NRO Staff consultants to the appropriate committees will be the only individuals authorized to report on NRP collection activities. From time to time the Staff consultants may invite other NRO participants to attend USIB committee meetings on specific projects.

The following flow diagram will illustrate the concept desired.

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Specific Functions:

Management. The DNRO will be responsible for ensuring that the military departments program for sufficient reconnaissance assets to accommodate national tasking. The NRO Staff will provide yearly guidance to the JRC which forecasts the estimated number of missions anticipated to be flown in support of the NRP. The DNRO will review and approve the yearly programs for the 147 and 154 drones, SR-71 and military U-2 aircraft. These assets will be funded by the military department. Modifications, procurement actions, and deployments must be approved by the DNRO.

The DNRO will be responsible for adjudicating cases wherein assets are required for both military theater operations and national missions.

No change in management of OSA assets is required.

Operational Control. The conduct of specific missions will be the responsibility of the JRC and OSA respectively. The JRC and OSA will operate the collection vehicles, ensure the necessary support of the operation and deliver the product to the appropriate national center for exploitation.

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303 Approval. The NRO Staff will prepare a monthly forecast of NRO reconnaissance activities requiring 303 Committee approval. This forecast will be forwarded directly to the 303 Committee by the NRO Staff. The 303 Committee response will be transmitted directly to the NRO.

Requirements. All USIB requirements necessitating overhead reconnaissance of denied areas will be submitted directly to the NRO.

Tasking. The NRO will task JRC and OSA assets only in response to stated USIB requirements. The NRO Staff will evaluate the USIB requirements for overhead reconnaissance and assign OSA or JRC assets to satisfy specific requirements. The NRO will task the JRC and OSA monthly for the satisfaction of USIB requirements by airborne vehicles. The JRC and OSA will submit the proposed number of missions and flight plans in response to NRO tasking to the NRO Staff for approval and 303 Committee action.

Evaluation. The JRC and OSA will report to the NRO Staff on the conduct of each mission. The NRO Staff will be responsible for evaluating the degree to which USIB requirements have been satisfied by OSA and JRC missions.

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Reporting. The NRO Staff will report to the DNRO and to the USIB as required on the status of requirements satisfaction.

Product. The product of all missions flown in response to NRO tasking will be nationally exploited.

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